

community

The New Apostolic Church around the world

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Pentecost 2020: The Spirit of liberty

Editorial

God's faithfulness leads us
into fellowship with Him

Divine service

Professing and loving

Doctrine

Divine calling and exercise
of ministry
A church in which people
feel at home

New Apostolic Church
International



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God's faithfulness leads us into fellowship with Him

Dear brothers and sisters,

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1: 9). When I read this Bible passage, I think about all of you. We all lead a life of our own. We live through highs and lows, sometimes filled with fear, and then filled with joy again. Our comfort is that God is faithful! He does what He says He will do. As human beings, we may not always notice this, especially since we only know a tiny part of the divine plan that He has in store for us. It is God who has called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ. He calls us and He elects us—not the other way around. He knows each and every one of us better than we know ourselves, and He knows everything. And He gives each one the freedom to either follow Him or not.

God calls us into eternal fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. This is something Jesus Himself has confirmed: He wants us to be where He is. Yet we already enjoy the fellowship of life with the Son of God in the here and now! We stand together with Him in all situations of life:

- in our own sufferings, we fight to remain in fellowship with God.
- we support Jesus in His mission, and proclaim the gospel by doing good works.
- we never forget this mission at any point in time, but rather make it our highest priority.

God calls us into the fellowship of the believers, that is, into the church:

- we want to be together, take action together, pray together, celebrate together, and work together.
- we strengthen this oneness and fight against discord; we avoid rumours, leave the past in the past, and talk about the good, not the bad.
- we serve one another and do not distinguish between “consumer” and “supplier”; each and every one can contribute to the well-being of our fellowship.



■ NAC International

God ultimately also calls us into the fellowship of Holy Communion, which

- is a foretaste of the marriage feast of the Lamb.
- reminds us that Christ has shared everything with mankind, including suffering and death.
- gives us strength to fight as He did.
- strengthens our brotherly fellowship with one another.

The same bread and the same wine—the same celebration of Holy Communion—is provided for all. What would we do without fellowship?

Thank you Lord, for making it possible for me to be part of this fellowship!

Warmest regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'S' connected together.

Jean-Luc Schneider



The Pentecost service, conducted in our church in Darmstadt (Germany), was streamed live on YouTube and could also be received via IPTV and telephone

■ Marcel Felde



2 Corinthians 3: 17

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit;
and where the Spirit of
the Lord is, there is liberty.”*

Professing and loving

My dear brothers and sisters, it is something very special indeed to celebrate Pentecost this way. Normally, we congregate to celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, what we call the birthday of the church of Christ. We always prayed and sang together, we worshipped God together, and we received a special blessing from our heavenly Father on Pentecost. We were blessed with the fellowship of the children of God, we were blessed with God's word, we were blessed with the celebration of Holy Communion, and the celebration of the Holy Communion for the departed. And

now God has changed our plans. We cannot congregate, we cannot celebrate Holy Communion, we cannot celebrate Holy Communion for the departed. We have no explanation for that. At least I don't. All we can do is humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. But, dear brothers and sisters, let us do as the woman from Canaan did, who kept coming to Jesus to ask Him to heal her daughter. Jesus refused because she was a Gentile. This woman said: If I cannot get the bread I will content myself with the crumbs. And when Jesus saw her faith she got what she wanted (Matthew 15: 21–28).

We cannot get the full menu of blessing right now. For some reason God has decided that we will have to content ourselves with crumbs. But we trust our heavenly Father and say: "If God gives us crumbs, we will be blessed with the crumbs." Sure, we long to get the all-inclusive menu, and we pray and hope that we will get it as soon as possible. As I said, God has changed our plans, and that applies to many, many brothers and sisters. Loved ones have passed away, others have lost a lot of money or even their source of income. In some regions, our brothers and sisters just cannot make their living. Our plans have been changed by God, but God has not changed His plan. He wants to lead His people into His kingdom. He wants to comfort us, to strengthen us, and to bless us. And He will do that. The Holy Spirit reminds us: "You are a child of God. Your Father won't forget you."

Let us now celebrate Pentecost. As an introduction, we will hear a Bible reading (Acts 2: 1–4, 12–21).

The first Pentecost was an important and decisive step in God's plan of salvation. The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit on earth, as the Father had previously sent the Son on earth. The Son and the Spirit, of course, have always been with the Father and have always been at work both on earth and in heaven. But we know that God sent His Son on earth to fulfil a special mission.

The Son became man to proclaim the will of God. He said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me" (John 7: 16).

The second mission of the Son was to gather together the people of God and to gather the flock to lead them into His kingdom.

And the third mission was to bring His sacrifice in order to open up the possibility for man to enter into the kingdom of God in the first place. Once He had fulfilled His mission, Jesus Christ went back to His Father. Then God sent the Spirit on earth, also with a special mission.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to proclaim God's will. Jesus told His disciples: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16: 12–13).

The Holy Spirit works in man and through man

The second mission of the Holy Spirit is to gather together the flock of Christ. Through the active power of the Holy Spirit the believers are incorporated into the body of Christ.

The third mission is to prepare the bride of Christ. The Holy Spirit wants to create within us the new creation so that our nature transforms into the image of Christ so that we can enter the kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit is active as a power. He is invisible. The Spirit works in man and through man. To be able to fulfil these three missions He needs human beings. And that is why the Holy Spirit takes hold of human beings, permeates them, sanctifies them, and thereby enables them to be a tool in God's hand and to help along in His plan. And that became obvious on Pentecost. Those who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to prophesy. They announced the will of God without any fear. Peter told the Jews: You know, this Jesus you didn't want, this Jesus you crucified, God has made Him Lord and Christ. It took some courage to tell the Jews that the Jesus they had crucified was now the Lord, the Messiah. The Holy Spirit enabled Peter and the others to proclaim the will of God without fear (Acts 2: 22–36).

That was the case again later on for Stephen, who died for his faith. It was also the case for Philip, who explained the gospel to the Ethiopian official. Later on, the four daughters of Philip served as prophets (Acts 8: 29 et seq; 21: 8–9).

Today, we are those who have been sanctified and sent by the Holy Spirit to proclaim God's will. And if we allow the Holy Spirit to permeate us, He will enable us to do this whatever happens. Today too, many people reject Jesus and His teaching. They say that this teaching is no longer applic-



able to our time. Others try to adapt the teaching of Christ. They regard Jesus as a miracle worker, and they sell Him that way. Others have changed the gospel into a method to do successful business with. But we have been sent to tell the world the true gospel of Jesus Christ as it is preached by the apostolate. The true gospel is still timely today and can be applied in every situation.

Many people think that things will change because of the coronavirus crisis, that there will be a world before and a world after the crisis. We need to reconsider the way we organise society and the economy; we have to reconsider how we use the natural resources; we have to reconsider our own life because we cannot continue on this way of selfishness—this way is a dead-end.

I don't know if there will really be a true change. I hope so, but I also know that humans are human. Nevertheless, let us fulfil our mission also in this time, enabled by the Holy

Spirit. Let us prophesy in word and deed. Really, the teaching of Jesus Christ is still valid. The Sermon on the Mount is valid. The Golden Rule still applies. We should act according to this teaching. Let us prophesy that spiritual wealth is much more important than earthly wealth. Of course, we do our best to provide our children with an education, we make sure that they are healthy and have everything they need. That is fine, but please don't forget that the greatest gift we can give them is to make sure that Jesus lives in their hearts. The greatest way to express our love for our children is to give them Jesus Christ.

Let us also be aware that we need to be more careful in how we use the resources of this earth. That is also an expression of our love for God and our neighbour. Sometimes brothers and sisters tell me: "Yes, but Chief Apostle, we don't want to stay on this earth, we want to go to heaven. It is not so important that we take care of the earth, let us take care of our soul. We want to go to heaven." I tell you: me too. I want



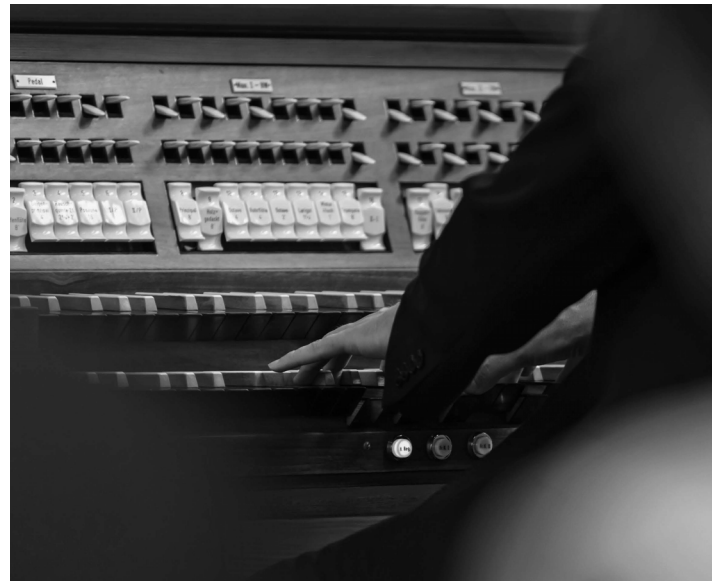
*Through the Holy Spirit
we are able to overcome
self-interest and to contribute
to the common good*

to go to heaven. But don't forget that man will continue to live on this earth until the Last Judgement. Man will be in charge of the earth until the Last Judgement. And by the way, we hope to be part of the royal priesthood. They will come back and be established on earth to serve the Lord on earth, on this earth.

So you see, even from a typical New Apostolic point of view it makes sense to be aware of how we should treat the environment.

This is how we can fulfil the first mission of the Son, the first mission of the Holy Spirit: to proclaim with courage and without any fear that the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule are still valid. We should always be aware that spiritual wealth is much more important than earthly wealth. Let us make sure that Jesus lives in the hearts of our children. And let us take care of this earth that we are living on.

The second mission of Jesus, the second mission of the Spirit, was to gather together the flock of Christ. And Jesus



was very demanding with respect to His flock. He said, "I want them to be one as My Father and I are one." In other words, He wanted the church of Christ, His church, to become an image of the unity of the triune God ... God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct divine persons, but they are perfectly one. And those reborn out of water and the Spirit should be one and reflect this unity. Sure, we remain weak sinners, and our unity will by no means be the same as the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But through the power of the Holy Spirit we can work on this unity and seek it.



Think about the first Christians. First there were the Jews, and then the Gentiles came in. I think we have a poor idea of the gap that existed between the Jews, the Gentiles, the Romans, and the Greeks. The Jews had centuries of traditions, culture, and religion. And the others were so different in every respect. And Jesus told them, “Now be one!” I think this gap was at least as big as the gaps we know today. Today we also have differences based on social background, on culture, age, gender, and sexual orientation. And for us these gaps are huge. I am not sure that these gaps are larger than the gap between a devout Jew and a Gentile. And then God even asked them to accept Saul, their worst enemy: accept him, he is now one of you (Acts 9: 3–5, 15). Thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit they were able to overcome these differences. What they did then we can do today too.

In this coronavirus crisis we experience solidarity among mankind. If one individual does not respect the rules, the whole community is threatened and in danger. I know in some regions they say, “Ah, don’t speak about that, we don’t have anybody here who is sick.” Sorry, I live in one of the most affected regions; I know what I am talking about. If one does not respect the rules, the whole community is threatened. And that is a nice image for the body of Christ.

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer” (1 Corinthians 12: 26).

To be brief: through the Holy Spirit we are able to overcome self-interest and to contribute to the common good, the well-being of all. Let us overcome self-interest in every respect and contribute to the well-being of the church, the body of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we can put aside our own interests and can contribute to the common good.

I come back to my country. We might not always be all that clever in France, but we have discovered something. We suddenly realised that people whom we did not value all that much were suddenly very, very important for society. They were not held in great esteem because they had non-qualified jobs and very small salaries, but in this crisis we realised that we could not do without them. Suddenly these people became very important for us.

There are different members on the body of Christ. Some have special gifts, others have important tasks to fulfil. But let us never ever forget that each and every member is as important for the Lord as all the others are. The gifts are different, the tasks are different, but every soul has the same value for God and should have the same value for us. So,



the second mission is: gather together, we have to overcome the differences, we have to overcome our own interests and contribute to the well-being of all. And we have to consider each and every member in the same manner.

The third mission of the Holy Spirit is to transform. We experience that the Holy Spirit does not change the situation. He is powerful, but He does not change the situation. He changes us! He provides us with more strength, more maturity. He helps us to develop the new creation within us in order for us to cope with the new situation. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to change us so that we can face every new situation. As I said, many people think that there will be changes in the future. There will soon be a change for all of us. The day will come when we can go back to church and attend divine services. How will we come back? Do we want everything to be as it was? We have got a unique chance to change something. Let us make a decision right now. When I go back to my congregation I want to be a different person. There are some adjustments to be made. Let us make decisions and stick by our decisions.

And the very last point regarding change: I know that in this time, and we are glad about that, many people who no longer attended the services follow the services on TV or the Internet. And I hope they can see how their Church has changed. More than ever Jesus is the focus. Please, follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And if you have the possibility, just come and join us. We want all of you, even those who have never been New Apostolic, to get the all-inclusive menu and to enjoy it.

CORE THOUGHTS

Christ is active in the church through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes us capable of serving Christ and loving our neighbour.

The unity of the church is an image for the unity of the triune God.

More than two thousand people attended the service at the East London International Centre while another 91,000 watched a video transmission



■ NAC Southern Africa

Nothing is possible without hope

What would a person be without hope? That is why it is crucial to know what to hope for! In East London in South Africa, on 15 December 2019, the Chief Apostle said: “The Holy Spirit nourishes our hope in eternal life. We wait for the return of the Lord and hold fast to this hope in trust and love.”

The people of Israel of old already cultivated hope in the Messiah for centuries, the Chief Apostle said as he began his sermon. “The believing people of that time were convinced that God would send them a king, who would rebuild the old kingdom and restore it to a state of peace and prosperity, liberated from all its enemies,” noted the Chief Apostle. “Their hope for this permeated their daily lives, but was nevertheless disappointed in the end,” remarked the Chief Apostle. “The Son of God came to this earth and did something else entirely. He liberated mankind from the yoke of sin and established an invisible kingdom: the kingdom of God.” Nobody had been planning on that. And what’s more: Jesus also made it quite clear that they could not

remain as they were. After all, only those who put on the new body would be able to enter into the kingdom of God.

Our hope: the kingdom of God

“And what is our hope?” the Chief Apostle asked. “We desire to enter into the invisible kingdom of God and live in eternal fellowship with God, where we will have true peace and true joy.” This does not mean that we cannot already today hope for the help of God, however. “Naturally, we can always ask our Lord to help us in our daily lives.” However, this help is only of a limited scope. After all, even the sick whom the Son of God healed at the time still died, ultim-



The Chief Apostle was accompanied by the District Apostle Helpers João Uanuque Misselo, Patrick Mandla Mkhwanazi, and Robert Nsamba

ately. “Our true hope is for life in the eternal kingdom of God. This hope is fed by the Holy Spirit. He tells us: Trust in God. Jesus has said that He will come again in order to lead us into His kingdom.”

Hope requires nourishment

And then the Chief Apostle listed a number of points to illustrate how the Holy Spirit strengthens this hope:

- He reveals to us that God will raise up the believers just as He raised up the Lord.
- He proclaims to us that the return of the Lord is imminent.
- He reminds us that we are children of God.
- He causes our love for God and our desire to be with Him to grow within us.
- He tells us we can already today experience a foretaste of this fellowship with God, namely through the liberty of the pardoned and the joy of the overcomer.

“We are not dreamers. We are convinced. We are sure that the promise of Jesus Christ will be fulfilled: He will return!”

Hope requires zeal

“We will need zeal in order to wait for the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise,” added the Chief Apostle, before going on to give some further counsel on how this might come into being:

- “The more we become acquainted with Jesus, the deeper our desire will be to be with Him eternally and to have fellowship with Him.”
- “We strive to be liberated from our human imperfections and to increasingly take on the image of Christ.”
- “We hope that God will fulfil His plan of redemption so that all human beings and the entire creation may be redeemed from the evil one.”

Hope requires trust

The Chief Apostle said that hope in the imminent return of the Lord gives purpose to our lives. And if this hope should ever become shaky, we will need to trust:

- “We believe firmly in the fulfilment of the promise. The unbelief of man has no bearing whatsoever on our trust in God.”
- “We do not allow our failures and mistakes to discourage us. God will fulfil the work that He has begun in us.”
- “We trust in the love of God, even though we do not always understand His actions.”
- “We trust the apostolate. Jesus will see to it that the Apostles will be able to fulfil the mission He has entrusted to them.”
- “Our afflictions do not call our gratitude toward God or our love for Christ into question. Our motivation to serve Him remains intact.”

CORE THOUGHTS

Romans 8: 25

“But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

The Holy Spirit awakens and nourishes our hope for eternal life. We wait for the return of the Lord and persevere in trust and love.



Jens Lange

He does what we cannot do ourselves

No matter how powerful evil is, there is always One who can snatch the prey away from even the biggest predator. Yet even He does not do everything Himself. Read how Jesus Christ relies on every single believer. Thoughts from a youth service in Berlin-Lichtenberg in Germany on 1 March 2020.

This promise dates back to a time when part of the people of Israel were deported to exile in Babylon. “God guided things in such a way that those who wanted—and only those who really wanted to—could return to Israel,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider explained, who sees this as an image of human salvation.

Threefold captivity

On account of original sin, man has fallen into a threefold captivity. He is a

- captive of the estrangement from God: “Man is no longer able to come close to God. A gulf was created that he is not able to cross.”

- captive of sinfulness: “As much as man might try, he cannot live without sin.”
- captive of death: “Man must die and experience the end of earthly life.”

Free in three steps

“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came on this earth in order to free man,” the Chief Apostle said:

- “Through His sacrificial death Christ has created the possibility for man to come back to God. Through baptism He washes away original sin.”
- Through Holy Sealing He creates a new creation within man, which He nourishes and develops. “Once we enter

the kingdom of God we will be perfected by the grace of Jesus Christ. We will no longer be sinners then.”

- “In the thousand-year-kingdom of peace people will still die, but after the Last Judgement even death will have been defeated.”

The prey of the terrible

“Jesus Christ wants to take the prey away from the terrible,” the Chief Apostle continued. “The prey is that which the devil constantly takes away from us again.”

- In our relationship to God: “He wants to rob man of his confidence in God. The devil has managed to sow doubt in man. He has taken away the fear of God. Man thinks he can manage without God.”
- In the relationship between people: “Often people have lost trust in each other. Some isolate themselves. Others know only accusations. And still others even feel hatred.”

But the message of Jesus is: “Whoever accepts My word and My sacraments can also be healed. I will restore your confidence in God, I will restore your fear of God. I can help you to live together again in love. I can snatch the prey back from the evil one.”

Taking advantage of the possibilities

“Jesus Christ will save us by His grace,” Chief Apostle Schneider said as he continued. “He only does for our salvation what we cannot do ourselves. Everything else we must do: God gives us His grace, but it is up to us to decide freely to participate in it.”

- “We must decide to believe. To believe means to decide and be determined to trust in God.”
- “He grants us the grace of forgiveness of sins. But we must be determined to change things. We must also be willing to forgive our neighbour.”
- “We have the possibility of becoming like Christ. It is up to me, however, to decide that I want to follow the example of Jesus Christ: I want to think, act, and be like Him.”
- “God gives us His love through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is up to us, though, to decide how we are going to work with this love.”

“God cannot do this for you,” the Chief Apostle reiterated. “This is our job.”



More than 1,200 young people attended the service in the large Berlin church. The Chief Apostle was accompanied by the District Apostles Joseph Ekhuya and Wolfgang Nadolny and District Apostle Helper John Fendt



CORE THOUGHTS

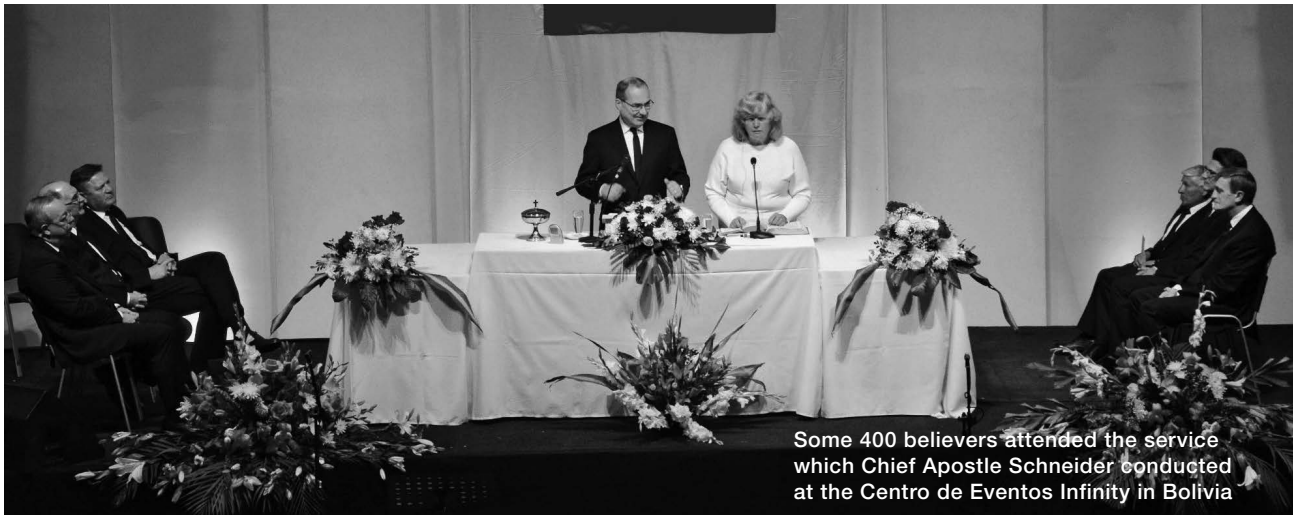
Isaiah 49: 25

“Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.”

We believe, we fight, we love, and we want to become like the Lord Jesus. This applies in the beyond as well as in this world. This is the way to salvation.

People after the heart of God

He was anything but perfect. And nevertheless, the biblical David was a man after the heart of God. This makes him an example for believers to this day, Chief Apostle Schneider said in a divine service in La Paz in Bolivia in August last year.



■ NAC Bolivia

“David was certainly not perfect,” noted Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider. “And yet the Bible states that he was a man after the heart of God. Why?”

Acting in faith and with courage

“David had faith in God as well as courage of faith,” said the Chief Apostle as he recalled the young man’s battle against Goliath. “He did not say, ‘I will kill this man.’ He said, ‘God will kill him through me.’”

“In our life of faith we too at times find ourselves in such situations, where we really feel the power of the evil one.” At such times, the important thing is to look to our example. “Do not give up the fight! Perhaps you cannot conquer evil, but God will do so through you! With Jesus we can gain the victory!”

Not repaying evil with evil

“David never wanted to repay evil with evil.” Whether it was when his persecutor Saul was at his mercy in the cave, or whether it was when Shimi, the son of Gera, publicly insulted, cursed, and threw stones at him—David did not lift a finger to hurt them. “He trusted in the righteousness of God.”

“That is also good counsel for our time. At times we too, are confronted by evil,” said the Chief Apostle, “but here too, let us remain firm. Let us act as David did. Let us not repay evil with evil.”

Capable of humbleness and remorse

“David was humble enough to admit, ‘Indeed, I have sinned.’” In order to cover up his adulterous affair with



Bathsheba, he had had her husband killed. Thereupon God sent the prophet Nathan to him. “And the king allowed the prophet to correct him. He conceded his sin and regretted it. And God forgave him.”

“Each one of us is a little king, so to speak: I am free. I can do whatever I want,” said the Chief Apostle. “Yes! But please allow yourself to be corrected. Allow God to tell you what does not please Him. And show remorse. Be humble, and God will forgive you.”

Filled with trust in God

“David also relied completely on God.” When his son Absalom wanted to kill him in order to take the throne for himself, David left his fate completely in the hands of God. “If He wants to deliver me, He will deliver me. And if He does not do so, that is all right too.”

“Often we do not understand what God is doing. His actions are at odds with our ideas.” At such times the wisdom of David can help us further: “Let God go to work. He will make everything right.”

For the sake of love rather than honour

“David also knew that, as king, he was also a servant of God.” He prepared everything in order to build the temple of God, but had to leave the completion of his great plan up to his son Solomon. “David was not even upset. He knew: ‘It is not about me. It is about God.’” The main thing is that the cause of God is served.

“This is also something that applies to us,” said the Chief Apostle. “Perhaps we have done the sowing in order to allow someone else to reap. But those who are truly motiv-

ated by the love of God can live with that. Even if they do not reap the glory and the joy, they have the confidence: ‘God knows why I did it. I did it out of love for Him.’”

In the Bible text, Paul states that David’s mission consisted of doing all of God’s will. “And this highlights his connection with Jesus Christ,” emphasised Chief Apostle Schneider: “Jesus Christ is the one man who fulfilled the will of God in its entirety, right to the end. Dear brothers and sisters, this mandate also applies to us. God has elected us in order to be His children. Let us be children of God after His own heart!”

CORE THOUGHTS

Acts 13: 22

“I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.”

God blesses those who fear Him. The fear of God means that we

- trust in His power, His love, and His righteousness.
- accept His word and show remorse.
- serve Him humbly.
- do His will under all circumstances.

DAVID IS ANOINTED KING

ACCORDING TO 1 SAMUEL 16: 1–13

David was the youngest of eight brothers. He looked after his father's sheep. David made sure that none of the sheep wandered off. If a wild animal came near the flock during the night, he would chase it away.

One day, God sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem. God said to him, "Go to Jesse. One of his sons is to be the next king of Israel. I will show you which one is to be king. Take a calf with you and invite Jesse and his sons to sacrifice it with you. Then I will show you whom you should anoint as king." Samuel did what God had told him. Samuel, Jesse, and his sons sacrificed the calf. When Samuel saw Eliab, he thought: he is going to be the new king. Eliab was tall and strong. But God told him that this one was not going to be the new king.



Jesse called one son after the other. Seven sons were presented to Samuel. Samuel, though, did not receive any sign from God. He asked Jesse, "Are these all of your sons?"

Jesse replied, "I have another son, David. He is the youngest. He is out in the fields looking after the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send someone to bring him to me."

When David arrived God said, "Go, anoint him. He is the one." So the youngest son, the shepherd boy, became king because God had chosen him. God's Spirit came upon David and stayed with him from that day on.



AT SUCCESS'S IN NYOR GBANWEA (LIBERIA)

This is a picture of me and my **friends**. My siblings are also in the picture. At the back is my uncle, who gives me private tuition at home after school.



My name is **Success**. I am eight years old and live in Nyor Gbanwea, a village in the district of Nimba. The country in which I live is called Liberia. Most of you have probably never heard it. It is situated in West Africa. A long time ago, in the 1820s, freed slaves from the United States were settled here, and this is where the name Liberia comes from (from the Latin word *liber* meaning “free”).

Meet my family: my father, Abraham; my mother, Genetta; my brother, Deazeem; and my younger sister. She has the same name as I do: Success. I am standing in the middle of our **family picture**.

This is a picture of me eating **rice** with palm butter. Rice is a basic food in Liberia. Everybody here in Nimba also loves to eat glea-gbar, better known as GB. It is a traditional food and made out of cassava.

I love my pets. I have a **dog**, whose name is Frisky, and a cat and a goat.



This is our **house**. It has three rooms.

We often walk seven kilometres into the country to get firewood for cooking. My **grandmother** comes with us because our parents are always busy and working in the fields.

This is my **school**. I go to a public primary school. It is about three kilometres from our village. My father takes me there in the mornings. I am in grade two. My teacher's name is Mrs Reeves. She is very friendly.

Our **congregation's** name is Gbanwea. We do not have our own church building; the services take place on the veranda of our Priest's house. Have you spotted me in the picture yet?

On Sundays we always have **Sunday School**. Lucia is our teacher. She loves us a lot and is a really good friend. Once a month, we put on a role play after the service for the whole congregation. Here we are acting out the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet.



Last year in October, the **Chief Apostle** visited us in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. My parents and I and other members from our district travelled more than 400 kilometres to be there. It was the first-ever visit of a Chief Apostle to our country. We were so blessed.



Divine calling and exercise of ministry

“God designates those who are called to exercise a ministry,” Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider says. In the following article he speaks about answered prayers and how divine help is experienced, but he also shows how one can deal with self-doubt and a lack of self-motivation—pointers for both ministers and members.

One of the tasks incumbent on the Chief Apostle is to strengthen his brothers. Who are my brothers? My brothers are, first of all, my closest assistants, namely the District Apostles and their Helpers. It is my heartfelt concern to be a true support to them. My brothers also include all the Apostles and all the other ministers. Among other things, they are strengthened by the fact that they are constantly made aware of their divine calling. Belief in this calling is based on

- the First Article of Faith, which expresses our belief in God, the Almighty,

- the Fourth and Fifth Articles of Faith, which state that Jesus rules His church and that God designates those who are called to exercise a ministry.

Chosen, not a stopgap

In places where the number of members is diminishing a minister may come to think he was only chosen for a ministry because he was the only one available. From a human point of view such a thought may seem justified. But our faith teaches us something different. God is

almighty: “Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth” (Psalm 135: 6). God is eternal and almighty. In His eyes, the past and the future are equally present. We believe that God has chosen those designated to serve Him. He has carefully guided things in such a way that these ministers would be in the place where He needed them at a specified point in time. Other brothers have doubts about their calling because they think they no longer meet the requirements of their ministry or their job description.

It is reasonable to expect the ministers to be competent with respect to pastoral care and teaching the doctrine, and I encourage all initiatives heading in this direction. However, we must make sure that we never give cause for a minister to have feelings of guilt. It would be totally out of place, for example, to state that the decline in divine service attendance is the result of incompetent ministers. Such an assertion would diminish the omnipotence of God, because in the past we have often seen that God is capable of doing great things through imperfect human beings. Besides, this would be unfair and be an insult to the brothers. After all, they did not apply for their ministry—they have merely responded to the Lord’s call. More than ever, our brothers need to feel the esteem, encouragement, and love of their District Apostle.

Called, not hired

In countries where God’s work of redemption is still young, some brothers initially regard themselves as workers who have been “hired” by their superiors—their leaders—and not as servants who have been called by Jesus Christ. I urgently ask our local Apostles to do whatever is necessary, whether through their teaching or their example, to ensure the brothers understand that an ordination is based on a divine calling, and that this is what determines their mandate.

To believe that ordination is a divine calling does not mean that God alone is the agent. It is the triune God who chooses the brother, and it is the Holy Spirit who communicates this choice to the church. In this case, a recommendation will be made by the responsible ministers in the congregation or district, and the Apostle will make a decision regarding the ordination into ministry. It is therefore indispensable for the responsible ministers to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and sanctify themselves before they recommend a brother for a ministry.

Normally, we are rather suspicious when a brother expresses the desire to be entrusted with a ministry. Such

a reaction is understandable considering that one automatically assumes that he wants to make his mark as a minister. However, it would be wrong to simply reject such brothers. We should rather make the effort to get to know them. If they are sincere, we would be foolish to deprive ourselves of their aid!

Together, not alone

Quite a number of brothers are discouraged because of the difficulties they encounter in the exercise of their ministry. Let us encourage them by reminding them that Jesus called upon us to share in His sufferings, but also in His joys: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4: 12–13).

Jesus had to endure the same sufferings that we do. Just like Jesus,

- we are exposed to the difficulties of daily life; the commitment we have made to God does not spare us (Matthew 8: 20).
- we are not always accepted, let alone appreciated (Mark 3: 21).
- we are confronted with ingratitude (Luke 17: 17).
- we sometimes meet with incomprehension (Matthew 16: 8).
- we experience setbacks.
- we suffer when children of God are divided.
- we feel totally alone at times.

However, we also experience the same joys as Jesus in the form of

- answered prayers;
- the experience of God’s help, for example, when we serve at the altar;
- fellowship with God in prayer;
- brotherly fellowship.

If we are prepared to suffer with Jesus and for Him we will also be able to count on His help. A minister who believes in his calling and trusts in God will not impose the burdens of his ministry on those around him. However, let us not hesitate to share our joys with our loved ones. Let us share the composure and calmness and the trust in God which we derive from our ministerial activity.

A church in which people feel at home

“A church in which people align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return.” This is the agenda of the church, Chief Apostle Schneider says. Such a Vision leads to changes in church life time and again. In his article he looks back on the past and puts his finger on a neglected task.

On the occasion of my ordination as Chief Apostle I indicated that my agenda was summarised in the Vision of the New Apostolic Church. Our stated objective is to be “a church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life”. I wish to further develop this idea in the following.

First of all, I would like to once again pay tribute to my predecessors, who have done an outstanding job. Inspired by the Spirit, our Chief Apostles have developed and enhanced our knowledge and allowed the Church to better respond to the mission with which the Lord has entrusted it.

It is not my intention to criticise the past, but to draw attention to how far we have come along this path. There was a time when we said that the Lord would return as soon as the last soul was sealed. To be ready it was necessary to be sealed, to remain faithful, and to have overcome the world. Faithfulness essentially consisted of attending all divine services and bringing one's offerings. The term “world” comprised everything going on outside the Church. To overcome the so-called world, it was necessary to stay away from everything outside, that is, outside of the New Apostolic Church. The mission of the Church in general, and of the Apostles in particular, therefore consisted of sealing souls and protecting the believers from the influence of the outside world. The primary purpose of the divine service was teaching, hence the importance accorded to the

sermon and ministry. Given this background, less attention was assigned to Holy Communion.

The church that proclaims the gospel of Christ

Today we have a different conception when it comes to the preparation of the bride. We are more concerned about fighting against sin and the old Adam, about living in accordance with the gospel, and becoming like Jesus. As a result, the love of Christ has become the standard of perfection. The mission of the Church, as it is defined today, reflects this development. To start with, we are to go to all people, teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ, and dispense the sacraments to them. But the Church is also to cultivate a warm fellowship in which the believers experience the love of God, as well as the joy of serving Him and others. The development of our liturgy is a response to this: by giving greater prominence to the celebration of Holy Communion, the intent was to make it possible for the believers to experience sacramental fellowship with Christ and among one another even more intensively.

But even so, we still have a way to go before the Church conforms to the principles of its Mission, because the Catechism presents two aspects of the church:

- first of all, it is a divine institution whose mission it is to make salvation accessible to human beings;
- beyond that, it is also a congregation that is to worship and praise God.

Our tradition was always to put special emphasis on the first point, namely to regard the church as an institution of salvation. In this context, we have always underlined, and rightly so, the great importance of the apostolate and ministry.

The church that worships and praises God

Concerning the second point, namely to regard the church as a community of believers who worship and praise God, we can and still must make progress. There is still room for development with respect to the communal character of the church as the body of Christ or the people of God. As such, the church as a whole is called upon to serve God. This means that all those who are reborn of water and the Spirit are called upon to bear witness of the gospel through word and conduct just as the Apostles do, thereby supporting them in their commission (CNAC 7.1). One does not require a ministry to worship God or give lively testimony of the gospel. The focus here is not on ministry but on duty.

Our Vision of the New Apostolic Church refers precisely to this communal character, and states that people—inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God—are to prepare themselves for the return of Jesus Christ and align their lives to the gospel.

This shows that true love plays a decisive role in the preparation of the bride of Christ. And love is inconceivable without corresponding works. To enable the believers to prepare for the return of the Lord, the church must give them the opportunity to perform works of love. We must make it possible for the believers to experience the joy of serving God and others. Christian love and serving one's neighbour is a service incumbent on the church of Christ as a community of the faithful. We cannot simply ignore this mission of the church of Christ.

The serving church

To start with, serving God and our neighbour entails that we commit ourselves and become involved in the Church. Many initiatives that are introduced cannot be completed

because the demand made on our ministers is already beyond what is reasonable. Do our ordained ministers really have to take care of everything? Practising Christian love does not require a ministry. Many things can be done without the need to involve the ministers.

Charity must not stop at the doorstep of our church. To what extent do we practise charity outside of church? Practising the gospel also entails providing help to the poor and the suffering. Are we always credible in this respect? To provide funding for humanitarian projects is a good thing, but it is certainly not enough. It is not my intention to follow the example of the other Christian churches: we have neither the means nor the necessary experience. Nor do we want to compete with them, let alone make a name for ourselves. I simply ask myself what the Lord expects from us in this respect. We must reflect on this question in our future deliberations, whether with regard to the definition of our conception of ministry or the organisation of activities in our Church. For my part, I see an opportunity to approach other Christians. It is certainly helpful to discuss theological issues with other churches, but I feel it is even more important for Christians to join forces in order to do good ...

Summary:

- It is the task of the church to impart salvation to mankind. In the divine services, the Apostles and ministers authorised by them proclaim the word of God and dispense the sacraments. The divine service is central to the congregational life.
- It is also the mission of the church to praise and worship God. This mission is incumbent on all believers. During the divine services the congregation collectively expresses praise and adoration in the prayer spoken by the officiant. But worship and praise can also be expressed without the presence of an ordained minister.
- In order to prepare herself for the return of the Lord, the bride must practise works of love. It is the mission of the church to provide believers with the opportunity to serve God and the neighbour. We must reflect on the best possible means of ensuring that the church can fulfil this mission.

Save our children: Universal Children's Day 2020

Do children really need their own awareness day? The United Nations certainly think so, for the world does not belong to our children, although it should. Some thoughts contrary to the general trend.



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Universal Children's Day is observed by 145 nations. It is a day to promote the needs and rights of children. The United Nations observes this day on 20 November every year—this marks the day in 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. “Do children have rights?” adults ask. “Sure we do,” the little ones answer. “And why should we make people aware of this?” – “Because we don't want you to forget that. Don't forget: every ten seconds a child dies of hunger: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, dead.”

The right to a childhood

Which rights are we talking about here? There are several that make a big difference for children: the right to a childhood, for example. Although child labour has been outlawed, it has not yet been eliminated. Small hands that have to contribute to a family's livelihood don't have time for more important things, such as playing with friends. In the third millennium, playing children must not become part of an anachronistic painting of a romanticised past. “Children in the museum” what a horrible idea! UNICEF estimates that ten per cent of the world's children are still engaged in forced child labour—in underground copper mines, in textile factories that hardly deserve their name, and on cocoa plantations. Adults would be too expensive, and the customers in the buying countries are not prepared to pay more for the products. A vicious circle!

Another important right is the right to say no. Being able to say no contributes to people's sense of identity and shapes their sense of self, their life. A child who only ever agrees to everything has no opinion of her own. It is only through a clear no that a child becomes a personality. And such a no does not even need to be justified in order to be valid. No is no. Period. If you want to raise children to have a say in matters you must also allow them to have their say. A child that is allowed to say no, says yes to herself.

What children need

What children really need

- are friends, advisors, and teachers who have time for them and listen to them.
- are places where they are safe, where they are guaranteed peace and protection.



■ Susanne Dietmann / Kindermissonswerk

■ are dreams that become reality every now and then. When dreams learn to fly, the trip to the horizon is worthwhile.

Children need people who want the best for them, who are generous without being arbitrary, who are interested in their world without constantly criticising it, and who can make themselves small enough to see through a child's eyes. This is the only way that children's rights actually become rights and not only obligations. Laws or official orders are not nearly enough to create rights for children.

Hands should bless and not fend off

Beware! Some cultures make a point of not taking into account children's preferences and opinions. This also applies to many cultures in our time. Although we can read everything black on white, reality is often quite different. Jesus Christ set the standard for the Christian creed: "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do

not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And He laid His hands on them and departed from there" (Matthew 19: 13–15). This applies irrespective of people's culture.

As long as children have to work in underground copper mines, we need to make people aware of Universal Children's Day. As long as there are grown-ups who sanction a no from a child's mouth as cheesy or superfluous, we need to observe this awareness day.

From the Bible

Who is the greatest? (Matthew 18: 1–5)?

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'"

Neither sign nor punishment

Pray for the suffering, thank the helpers, and trust in God ... This is what the Chief Apostle urged all believers should do during the coronavirus pandemic. And he made very clear how he does *not* want the pandemic to be interpreted, on no account. Following is an excerpt from his worldwide Easter service in April 2020.

I have read that many millions of people are already infected. Hundreds of thousands have already died, and the pandemic continues to spread. It is causing much hardship and suffering. People's health is at stake, their life. Even the economic consequences cannot yet be properly assessed from today's perspective.

I am aware of course that for many people in Africa, in Venezuela, and in Asia this crisis is just one more line on a long, long list of plights which they face. I am going to mention just one example: the brothers in Africa reported that 140,000 children died of the measles last year in Africa.

What do we say? How do we react?

First of all, we sincerely sympathise in the suffering of those who are affected by it. We pray for all those who are in great need and hardship. As New Apostolic Christians we strictly adhere to the regulations and guidelines issued by the authorities. And there is something else that is very important here, that we are an example. We are extremely grateful to the many people for their selfless service to others and pray for them.

It is also important to me to once more make clear that we do not see this coronavirus crisis as a sign of the times, predicting the end of the world or the coming of Jesus. The Bible does not say anything about the coronavirus! Our faith in the return of Jesus Christ is not based on signs, but on statements by Jesus Christ and the activities of the Holy Spirit.

There are also people who believe that this pandemic is a punishment sent by God. Such a statement does not come from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks of God as

the God of love, not of a God who wants to punish human beings.

Once again, the Bible says nothing about the coronavirus crisis. But the Bible and the Holy Spirit tell us how we should act in such a situation: we trust in God and faithfully follow Jesus Christ.



Macrel Felde

Education is a way out of poverty

He has been involved with charity and fundraising for 45 years. Here is how a New Apostolic manager from Germany helps Catholic nuns in the Philippines get thousands of children out of the slums.

Small huts made of scrap wood, corrugated iron, plastic, and cardboard that have been nailed together, often directly on the beach and on stilts over the water. These small dwellings are home to large families. There is no power, running water, or toilets. And everywhere you look there are mountains of trash, poverty, and suffering. Manila's slums are home to the poorest of the poor. Malnutrition, diarrhoea, skin diseases, drug use, sexual abuse—the list of hazards to which children are exposed in these slums is long. “The conditions here are unimaginable,” Bernd Ambiel from the congregation Karlsbad-Langensteinbach in Germany says. “After my first visit to a slum I was traumatised for a year.”

Every time Ambiel, an economist and the long-serving manager of a marketing firm, goes to Manila he visits one of the slums as a member of the board of a sponsoring association that supports The Sisters of Mary, an independent Christian institution devoted to helping the poor in the Third World. The Sisters have been operating charitable programmes for more than fifty years in poor neighbourhoods of large and overcrowded cities.

Jointly active

How did his commitment to The Sisters of Mary come about? Bernd Ambiel reports: “At the time, my boss often travelled to America on business. In 1975 he came back from a trip and told me that he had met a Catholic priest who looked after orphans in Korea. He wanted to support the project. With seven employees we founded an association. As manager of our company's finance division, I was elected to the board of directors.”



The children and young people are given intensive vocational training

“This is applied Christianity!”

On average, the association transfers about 18 million euros for humanitarian aid to the Philippines. The funds allow The Sisters of Mary to run a school with four campuses in the Philippines—two for girls and two for boys.

More than 10,000 children and youth from underprivileged families are currently living there and attending school. About 500 children complete their courses every year. Many complete junior or senior high school and continue with post-secondary education thanks to donations and scholarships from patrons.

The girls and boys are not only taught academic subjects but also receive extensive training in manual skills. Their skills are sought after on the job market.

Gratitude motivates doubly

The children pass on the love and compassion they experienced at the school to their colleagues, friends, and neighbours, and to their own children. The Sisters of Mary succeed in awakening new hope in a generation that is otherwise largely hopeless. “This is applied Christianity!” This is something that Bernd Ambiel hears quite often when he talks about his work.

Helping where Covid-19 fuels hunger and poverty

For many people Covid-19 is just one more emergency they have to cope with. For them it has long been a question of survival! Here is what New Apostolic organisations are working on together to alleviate the worst.



■ NAK-karitativ, NAC SEA Relief Fund, human aktiv

The situation in Africa is particularly dramatic, NAK-karitativ points out and reports from Kenya: “In the slums of Nairobi the virus is causing catastrophic situations. The few hospitals and doctors are hopelessly overburdened.” While the official figures seem relatively low, the estimated number of unreported cases is huge.

“It may not be much, but it is a start.”

The charity has been working to improve people’s lives in Mukura Slum in Nairobi for years now. Together with KUMEA, the charity of the New Apostolic Church East Africa, and a local organisation called On Eagles’ Wings (OEW), several hundred particularly affected families are receiving emergency aid kits. The kits contain basic food-stuffs and hygiene items. “Given the hardship it may not be much, but it is a start.”

The New Apostolic Church South-East Asia provided food and a foot-operated hand-washing station on Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines. Funded by a group of Swiss merchants, NAC SEA Relief Fund provided the logistics, including the transport into the crisis region.

Emergency rations in digital form

NAK-karitativ is also helping several thousand families by co-operating with Masakhe Foundation, the charity of the New Apostolic Church Southern Africa. The families are being provided with food and hygiene kits. The Church office in South Africa is increasingly relying on vouchers in digital form to reduce the risk of infection by reducing avoidable contacts.

Nonetheless, the Church in South Africa has received permission from the Police Services to distribute food parcels to seniors and needy people. In addition, approved aid agencies requiring drop-off and collection points may utilise our churches. And finally, Apostles are establishing partnerships between congregations to provide support to members in need.

Swift aid is essential

The charity of the District Church Southern Germany, human aktiv, has released immediate aid to the tune of 70,000 euros for four African countries.

- Families in Djibouti in East Africa are being provided with masks, gloves, soap, and essential food items.
- Hygiene courses, health scouts, and washing facilities are being funded in the southern part of Guinea.
- In Ghana, governmental aid programmes are receiving support.
- In Uganda, health scouts are being trained. These are former street children who are to advocate better health practices among their friends in the slums.

The charity, human aktiv, has so far given the same amount to food banks in the south of Germany as additional emergency aid. Here people living precarious lives can buy food at reduced prices and often also other everyday necessities. Although COVID-19 is putting increasing pressure on many people and exacerbating the need of the vulnerable, food banks are receiving fewer food donations.

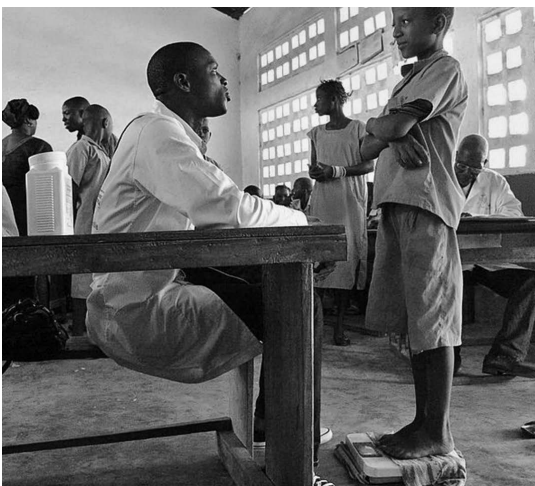
Lockdown spent on the construction site

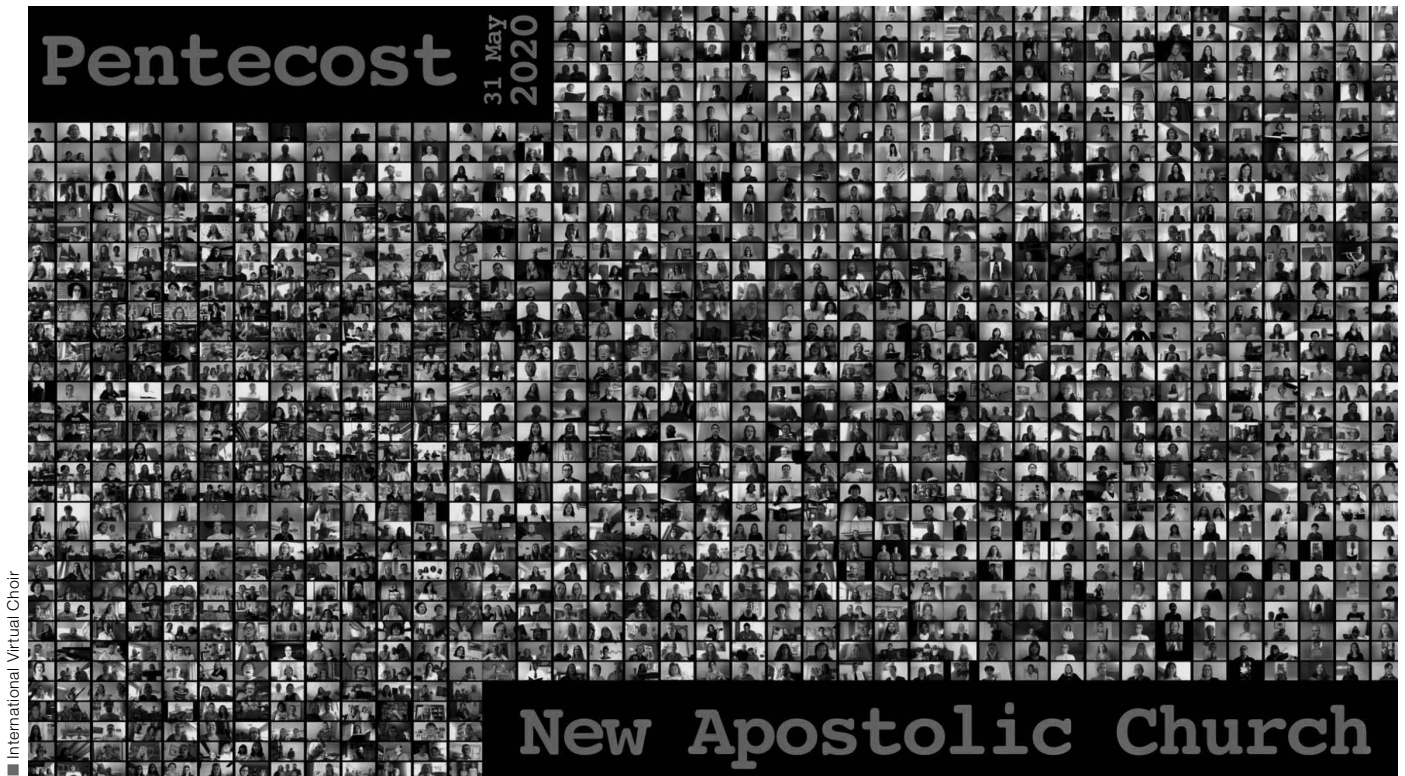
Meanwhile, ongoing humanitarian aid projects are continuing. The three German District Churches Northern and Eastern Germany, Southern Germany, and Western Germany have donated a total of 186,000 euros to Mantapala Refugee Settlement in Zambia. It is situated in the north of the country and shelters nearly 15,000 people who have had to flee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. NACRO, the charity of the New Apostolic Church Zambia, is organising the aid locally.

And one joint project by NAC SEA Relief in the Philippines and NAK-Humanitas (NAC Switzerland) is braving the coronavirus lockdown with special clearance from local authorities and the necessary precautions. Work is continuing on a new school building in Bugton Kahoy on the island of Negros in the Philippines. The facility is to be completed by the beginning of the new school year at the end of August. In order to be able to finish on time, the workers spent the lockdown—more than two months—on the construction site instead of with their families.



Right: Food kits being distributed
Below: Doctors training health scouts and examining children





| The 2020 Pentecost hymn

They managed to finish just in time for Pentecost: the International Virtual Choir. And what a job it was sifting through some 80 hours of music videos from 1,600 singers in fifty countries.

Friday, 29 May, seven o'clock in the morning: Théo, Cédric, Cathy, and Pascal are dead beat and can finally get some sleep. They have been burning the midnight oil for two nights straight. Now the computers are processing the data.

The days and nights before they had spent sifting through and sorting videos. By Wednesday, the deadline, 1,317 videos had been submitted, and another 150 or so trickled in afterwards. And on many videos there was more than one person singing.

A working holiday

Which vocal part, which language, which video or audio quality? There was so much to consider until the proper spot was found in the montage. In which order should the

recordings be presented? How do you best mix hundreds of audio tracks?

The four friends were extremely well organised. They had set up an extra website and a database to store the clips, and they even worked in shifts. In fact, they took a few days of unpaid leave from their jobs to tackle the project.

Not every video made it

The response was so overwhelming that they just could not do everything they had planned, such as the newsletter. And the odd request or question by email or Messenger just could not be answered. Nor did every video clip make it into the final edited montage—for organisational, time-related, or technical reasons.



Nearly 1,500 individual music videos were combined into a single virtual choir. Singers and instrumentalists from all over the world, both young and old, sent in their individual videos

The team hopes that no one was disappointed and that everyone understands. The ultimate goal was, after all, to be done by Pentecost. Not only did the team need time to process the clips, but even more so the number crunchers.

They really put their heart into it

Théo, Cédric, Cathy, and Pascal combined four computers to a cluster—and then added extra cloud capacity. Processing the enormous amount of data of 80 hours of stacked audio and video clips into a few minutes of track length requires a lot of processing speed.

Maybe they will create a bonus version after Pentecost with the remaining material. “We really put our heart into this,” the four say. “It was a great experience to be able to chat with so many sisters and brothers from around the world.”

The lead singers make all the difference

Music connects: during the long lockdowns, more and more New Apostolic choristers joined online singalongs to tackle isolation caused by stay-at-home orders. There was one special virtual choir that sang to the world at Pentecost. Here is more on the IVC Project.

The project followed the popular trend of online choir projects, for which people record their part at home with their smartphone. This is then combined into a virtual choir with other videos on the computer. This time, however, the singing was not only to help people break out of social isolation, but also make its way across language barriers and national borders.

Wielding the baton was Nicolas Jean from Strasbourg. Together with Fabrice Coulon they are the music representatives of the New Apostolic Church France. Nicolas makes his living as director of two music schools. And he is not entirely unfamiliar with a large stage and audience: he conducted the youth choir during the service of the Chief Apostle at the 2019 International Youth Convention.

How do you conduct such a choir without there being any interaction between conductor and ensemble? “It only works indirectly,” Nicolas Jean explains. You can only influence the lead singers, he says. For every part there is an accompaniment track, which the participants listen to on headphones and then record their part.

He was so happy to have a team of enthusiastic volunteers at his side, who made the project possible in the first place: Laurent Boetzelé, the organist, or the twelve lead singers, among them Burkhard A. Schmitt from Germany or Alexandra Junker from Switzerland.



private

DISTRICT APOSTLE MICHAEL EHRRICH:

Let Yourself Be Freed!



When we speak about freedom, we should first of all understand what we can be captivated by and what we want to be liberated from. For this is a kind of captivity that has nothing to do with an earthly prison. For example, we could be

- ensnared in the constant struggle for more and more earthly wealth, success, status, power, and so on. This race leaves no time for the important things: our preparation for eternal life.
- caught up in our own ideas and conceptions. They are so predominant so that one is not prepared to live according to the commandments and to avoid what does not correspond to God's will.
- doing time in the prison of fears and cares. Because of our difficulties and problems we do not respond to the exhortation to be consistent in our discipleship.
- bound by complacency or arrogance so that we cannot find the path to humility and the fear of God. In the prison of

our own self, the focus for God's good deeds upon us and the will to be grateful might also be missing.

- entangled by thoughts and influences which block the gospel. Those who are completely caught up in self-centredness and self-realisation do not open themselves to the love of God and do not have a heart for their neighbour.

Jesus Christ can free us from all of this through His sacrifice and merit. By making us free, Christ's nature can unfold within us. Then we are free:

- to grow in love for God, for one another, and for our neighbour;
- and ready to serve Him, to help along in our congregations, and to help one another;
- to put Him at the center of our lives and to model our lives on His gospel.

At His return, He will free us for eternal fellowship with God and for His glory.

Michael Ehrich

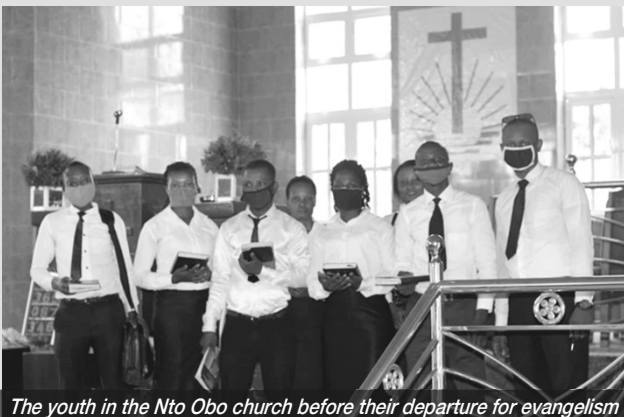
NIGERIA:

Christ Makes Every One Free

On August 21, 2020 some youths of New Apostolic Church Nigeria, Nto-Obo district in South West (Apostle E. S. Udoh working Area) went out for evangelism based on the theme "Christ makes free" which is the motto of the year. Despite the global outbreak (Covid-19) they were still able to reach out to so many people teaching them about Christ. The youth further enlightened the people on how Jesus Christ makes everything possible for us. They encouraged the people to

all to make Christ their priority in everything by following His ways and practicing His teachings for example:
Unconditional love to your neighbour
To reciprocate the love of God

They concluded by letting them know that:
Christ makes every one free – from sin, from evil and from all afflictions.



The youth in the Nto Obo church before their departure for evangelism



The youth with a family during the evangelism



GHANA: Christ Makes Free!

The newly established orchestra of the Madina congregation



The newly expanded Kumasi Central congregation orchestra

This year, 2020, has truly tested our belief and faith in the motto declared by our Chief Apostle: *Christ Makes Free*.

However, despite the pandemic, we have been free to exhibit our election in God and to express our love for God and neighbour.

In Accra and Kumasi, young members made use of their extra free time to learn how to play string instruments to edify divine services and inspire the fellowship of saints.

Members of the Tema congregation found a lot of joy in celebrating the opening of their new church building despite the raging pandemic.

In Sunyani and around Ghana, confirmands exhibited their free will and earnestness to commit themselves to the Triune God.

In Konongo, the Youth freely supported the reopening of churches with sanitary items and protective equipment.



The joy at the dedication of the Tema Church building in the midst of a pandemic



The Konongo Youth contributed to the reopening of all congregations



The confirmands of 2020 offered their vows with freedom of faith

BENIN: Freedom is a Gift

The year 2020 is coming to an end with its share of surprises. But young people are keeping in mind the motto of the year 2020, namely: "Christ sets us free!". As large gatherings are still forbidden, our young people have organized meetings on various aspects of the motto. The motto is also discussed at the end of the divine services to keep in mind that "Freedom in Christ is not an end in itself, it is not a good gift, nor is it our own merit. Freedom is a gift from God, which no one can deserve.



The young people of Missèbo-Doga at the end of a youth meeting

TOGO: Christ Breaks Chains

The brothers and sisters in Togo expressed the annual motto "Christ makes free" in an artwork symbolizing the cross as the sacrifice of Jesus breaking the chains of sin. With stickers printed, the brothers and sisters posted the year's motto on their vehicles, doors and gates of their houses.

To live the motto consciously was a special challenge especially in the pandemic. The youth formed a WhatsApp group that allowed them to freely interact and even organize a virtual music competition.

Through technology and social media, the brethren lived the freedom of the Spirit and thus exchanged ideas.



The motto of the year "Christ makes free" on colourful stickers



After the Divine Service in Bamend / NW-Cameroon

As we look back to our motto “Christ Makes Free”, we recall the act of our District Apostle to us in Anglophone Cameroon. This part of the country has been in serious crisis since late 2016. The New Apostolic Church International sympathized with the suffering population of the Church, donating a huge sum to enable the people know that they are not forgotten. This is how we look back on our motto “Christ Makes Free” especially during this crisis and pandemic.



Happy members after receiving humanitarian help

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: Keep it in Your Heart

The children of the Congregation Bata I in Equatorial Guinea have kept the motto of the year 2020 “Christ makes free” in their hearts and expressed this even in difficult times.

Many young people are now more involved in congregational activities such as in the education of children. Before any act, the group of teachers and servants meet to plan the execution of the activities of the children and youth.



The children's choir of Bata



Planning of the activities

CAMEROON:

Experience Freedom In Christ



Young members and devoted adults of Bamenda-Ntarikon congregation

This year’s motto “Christ Makes Free”, has meant a lot to the people of Anglophone Cameroon. Not only affected by COVID-19, they have also suffered ongoing socio-political crisis in the area. This has led to the breakdown of social structures that protect families and many young people have indulged in drugs and violence. Unfortunately, many have died as a result. This year’s motto was used to sensitize the youth about the adverse effects of drugs and violence.



Apostle Ignatius Chi after a meeting in NW-Cameroon

GUINEA:

Joy About New School

Together with the JWF Foundation, the New Apostolic Church has supported the further development of the Lola School in Guinea. 6 classrooms with an office and a shop were built. Apostle Leno, together with officers of the JWF Foundation is pleased about the achievement even during this pandemic in the southern region of Guinea. The brothers and sisters are looking forward to the inauguration of the new classrooms.



The new school building is completed



Apostle Leno in the new classroom of the school of Lola

Annual Thanksgiving Day

NIGERIA:

“God’s Great Works”

As New Apostolic communities around the globe celebrated the 2020 Thanksgiving Day on October 4th, the event in Nigeria was very spectacular. Most altars in the Nine Apostle working areas were beautifully decorated with flowers, fruits and vegetables. Members and guests in their large numbers had reasons to show gratitude to God for His love, faithfulness, protection and benevolence. Most families expressed



Thanksgiving Altar decoration at Ekan congregation

their appreciation to God for his unfailing grace and mercies in the midst of the ravaging coronavirus pandemic which has humbled the entire humanity.

GHANA:

“How Great You Are, O Lord!”

On the occasion of Thanksgiving Day, the congregations in Ghana also experienced a special divine service where the overwhelming nature and power of God in His creation and works was proclaimed: “O Lord, how manifold are Your works!”

In wisdom, God made everything; the earth is full of hispossessions. In a grateful and worshipful way, the brethren acknowledged the awe-inspiring works and wisdom of God.



The altar decoration at Osu congregation

SIERRA-LEONE:

“For I was Hungry, and You gave me Food...”

Through the New Apostolic Church in Sierra Leone, the Jörg-Wolff-Foundation has donated food and non-food items to less privileged people in Sierra Leone.

At a time when COVID 19 has paralyzed the economies of many countries around the world, particularly needy people are suffering the effects. They find it difficult to meet their basic daily needs.



Apostle Garber symbolic handing over items to Rev Bob Deen

Against this background, the New Apostolic Church and the JW Foundation have made a donation of various food and non-food items such as rice bags, vegetable oil, condiments, tomatoes, onions, and bath soap, to name but a few, to the School of the Deaf and Dumb in Bo City, Sierra Leone.

The ceremonial handover was concluded with a heartfelt prayer from Apostle Albert Garber.



Apostle Garber posed with some school members

District Apostle Area: Divine service with the District Apostle



Brothers and sisters from many countries of the Southern Germany District Church were united in a joint divine service on Sunday, 27 September 2020. The District Apostle Michael Ehrich conducted the divine service at the church in Sindelfingen/Germany.

Bible text: "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."
(Psalm 16:8)

Core thoughts: Our District Apostle showed that with our human limitations we cannot really imagine God, the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth. But in Jesus Christ God came into the world. "If we want to see God in our eyes, we must look to the Lord Jesus."

Jesus Christ personifies the loving, caring Father who blesses us and whom we can trust with all our heart.

The loving Lord is also the servant. We can think of the washing of the disciples' feet through Jesus Christ (John 13). With this He gave the disciples an example of humble service.

The District Apostle mentioned the forgiveness of sins as a special service of the Lord.

The example of the loving, servant Lord is a clear message for Christians: "We are baptized into Christ and we are supposed to attract His essence - there is actually only one consequence, namely that we are prepared to do service for the Lord as well". How this can happen is made clear by the Lord in the pictorial discourse of the Last Judgment (Mt 25,31 ff). Service to one's neighbour, out of love, is also a service to the Lord.

In addition, our District Apostle led us to keep peace and prepare for Christ's return.

"If we always keep the Lord before our eyes and orient ourselves to Him, God is with us and we do not waver. We can meet all challenges, stand firm and go with courage into the future, which the return of Jesus brings us."

